



Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish,
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VERATRUM CALIFORNICUM **CALIFORNIA FALSE-HELLEBORE**

California False-hellebore is a robust perennial with solitary, unbranched stems that are 1-2 m high and arising from thick rhizomes. The numerous, alternate, broadly elliptic, sessile leaves are 20-30 cm long, with entire margins and parallel veins, and they sheath the stem at the base. Foliage is glabrous below, with the stem becoming densely short hairy above. The nearly sessile flowers are crowded in a narrow, erectly branched inflorescence that is 30-60 cm long. Each flower has 6 white, petal-like, narrowly elliptic tepals that are 10-15 mm long with green markings at the base. There are 6 stamens that are less than 1/2 as long as the tepals, and a glabrous ovary that matures into an egg-shaped capsule which is 2-3 cm long. Flowering in July-August.

The more common *VERATRUM VIRIDE* has greenish flowers, with petals that are 6-10 mm long and arranged on drooping branches of an open inflorescence.